REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of the present application is respectfully requested.

Claim 34 has been cancelled.

The claims have been revised responsive to the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 112, which is believed to be moot. In particular, the objected to phrase at the end of Claim 9 has been deleted and Claim 24 has been amended to clarify that the opening port comprises the opening portion.

Claims 9, 24, 29 and 32 have been amended to recite a means or step of moving the movable stage away from the wall that separates the low cleanliness room from the high cleanliness room, or away from the opening portion through which the dust free article is transported between the high cleanliness room and the container, to separate the container from the cover unified with the door. Basis for this is the stage driving mechanism 108 (paragraph bridging pp. 13-14).

New Claim 35 is generally based on Claim 24 and further recites that the surface of the container at which the seal is formed at the opening port is angled to a direction of movement of the cover by the driving apparatus for opening and closing the opening portion of the loader and the container by moving the unified cover and door within the loader, whereby friction is not generated when the cover is moved. Basis for this is found at Figs. 4A, 4B, 5A-5D, and page 16, lines 7-19.

Claims 24-28 and 32-34 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being obvious over Muka et al in view of Briner et al and Mastroianni, all of record. Additionally, Claims 9, 11-15 and 29-31 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being obvious over Muka et al in view of Briner et al and Mastroianni, and further in view of U.S. patent 5,186,594 (Toshima et al), which was cited to teach a loader located in a low cleanliness room. Nonetheless, it is

respectfully submitted that none of the prior art teaches the presently claimed means or step of moving the movable stage to separate the container from the cover unified with the door.

As is explained on page 5 of the present specification, it was known to fix the cover of a transport container to the door of a loader and to move the unified assembly both horizontally to separate the cover from the container, and vertically to open the container and loader, using the same driving mechanism. An example of this is shown in Muka et al, in which the load lock door 80 provides both the vertical drive actuator 122 that opens the door 80 and the horizontal drive actuator 100 that separates the carrier door 42 from the carrier 32. This results in a complex structure having multiple moving parts in the vicinity of the opening to the high cleanliness room, which generates dust that can reach the high cleanliness room.

According to the feature of the invention now recited in Claims 9, 24, 29 and 32, the container cover unified with the door is instead separated from the container by moving the movable stage mounting the cover away from the wall that separates the low cleanliness room from the high cleanliness room. As a result, the door driving mechanism, which need not provide this function, can be made simpler to generate less dust that can reach the high cleanliness room.

As already mentioned, Muka et al does not teach a means or step of moving the movable stage 60 to separate the container 32 from the cover 42 unified with the door 80, this separation instead being done by the drive actuator 100 mounted to the door 80. In Mastroianni, the coupled door 39 is removed from the carrier by the controller 22 located in the clean room (col. 3, lines 51-54). Also, neither Briner et al nor Toshima et al discloses this feature. The amended claims are therefore believed to define over this prior art.

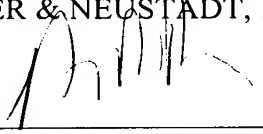
New Claim 35 recites hat the surface of the container at which the seal is formed at the opening port is angled to a direction of movement of the cover by the driving apparatus

for opening and closing the opening portion of the loader and the container by moving the unified cover and door within the loader, whereby friction is not generated when the cover is moved. This is also not taught by the cited prior art.

Applicants therefore believe that the present application is in a condition for allowance and respectfully solicit an early notice of allowability.

Respectfully submitted,

OBLON, SPIVAK, McCLELLAND,
MAIER & NEUSTADT, L.L.P.



Bradley D. Lytle
Registration No. 40,073
Robert T. Pous
Registration No. 29,099
Attorneys of Record

Customer Number
22850

Tel: (703) 413-3000
Fax: (703) 413 -2220
(OSMMN 08/09)

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